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AUTHOR Murray, David R.
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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses Kentucky School Reform and its impact on higher education; how Alice Lloyd College engages with teaching practitioners to address their needs through service learning and service leadership development; and potential applications of the program in other institutions. The paper recommends that future service learning ventures: (1) should be interdisciplinary efforts involving the entire higher education community; (2) should be infused into the curriculum, course work and field experiences; (3) should be diversified in their service efforts; (4) should be continuous processes focused on goals that will improve academic and social conditions; (5) extend into out-of-school activities; (6) incorporate projects that engage people at their appropriate levels; (7) empower people to solve their own problems; and (8) promote citizenship emphasizing lifelong service as a member of a global community. (Author/MAH)

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Charting a New Course and Facilitating College and School Collaboration Through Service Learning and Service Leadership Development

Presented to the International Council for Innovation in Higher Education Vancouver, British Columbia, CANADA November 3-7, 1996

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by: Dr. David R. Murray
Associate Professor of Education
Alice Lloyd College
Pippa Passes, KY 41844 USA
phone: (606) 368-2101 x5711
email: mmurray@eastky.com
fax: (606) 368-2125

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Associate Professor of Education
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Pippa Passes, KY 41844 USA
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email: mmurray@eastky.com
fax: (606) 368-2125

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by Dr. David R. Murray, Alice Lloyd College

Abstract:

Recently schools across the United States have introduced major reform initiatives that have a direct impact on the way teacher education candidates are prepared in American colleges and universities. Many of these reform efforts were devised from internationally accepted research based standards to help children compete in a global society. Implementation of these reforms has been a bottom up effort and requires optimal exchange between higher education and teaching practitioners in the field. Alice Lloyd College, located in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, has developed a multi-faceted model that has initiated collaborative efforts based on service learning and service leadership development concepts. The objective of this paper is to: (1) provide an understanding of Kentucky School Reform; (2) discuss its impact on higher education and (3) provide an overview of how Alice Lloyd College engages with teaching practitioners to address their needs through service learning and service leadership development. Finally, the underlining principals of the program will be discussed in relation to potential applications in other institutions.

The following recommendations are suggested for future service learning ventures: service learning should be an interdisciplinary effort involving the entire higher education community; it should be infused into the curriculum, course work and field experiences; be diversified in its service efforts, be a continuous process focused on goals that will improve academic and social conditions; extend into out of school activities; incorporate projects which engage people at their appropriate levels; empower people to solve their own problems and finally, promote citizenship emphasizing life long service as a member of a global community.

Charting a New Course and Facilitating College and School Collaboration Through Service Learning and Service Leadership Development

by Dr. David R. Murray, Alice Lloyd College

Introduction:

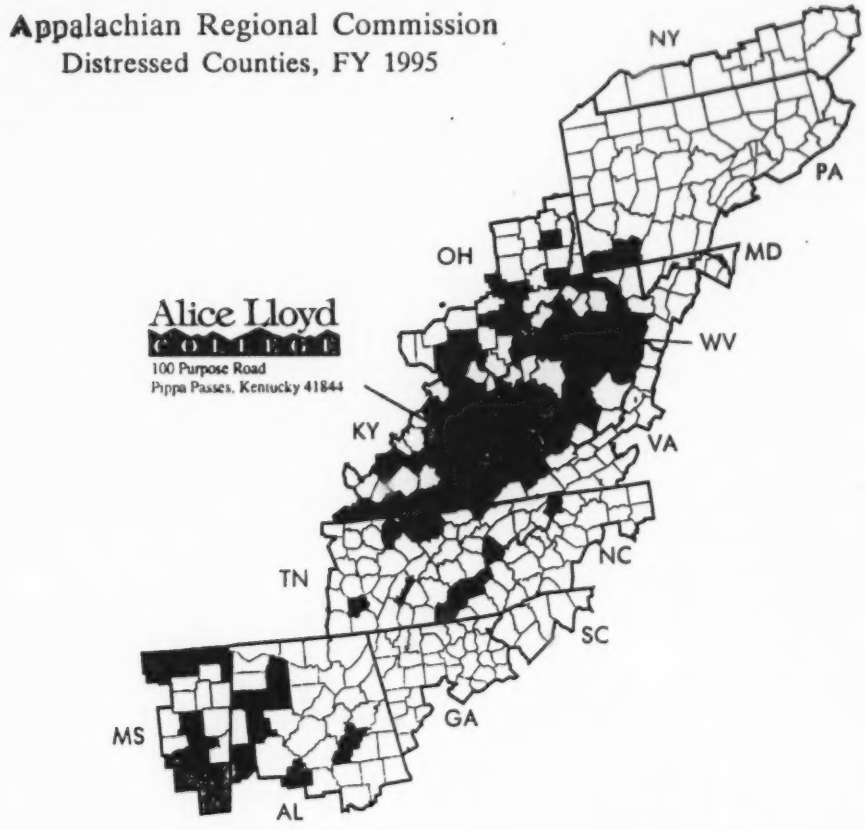
The objective of this document is to discuss the prevailing regional conditions in Eastern Kentucky, the impact of Kentucky educational reform in this region and the service learning opportunities that have been established to strengthen and improve school success for children in the area schools.

Community Conditions:

The success of Alice Lloyd College comes, in large measure, from its long-standing commitment to service by the college to the Appalachian region. The College is located in the fifth congressional district of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This mountainous, rural district, is one of the poorest regions in the United States of America by most economic indicators. For example, in the Knott County schools, more than 70% of the students are on free or reduced lunch programs and over 13% are expected to drop out of school each year. State assessment results indicate that more than half of the students are in the novice classification which is the lowest category of performance as measured for core learning areas of academic study (such as math, science and language arts). According to a recent publication from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), an agency of the US federal government, "The geographic and cultural isolation that led the region to fall behind the nation in economic development is also an impediment to its participation in globalization of the nation's economy" (Appalachian Regional Commission Report, 1996, p. 5). The report also indicated that, "Rural counties in Appalachia are twice as likely to be considered 'severely distressed' as rural counties elsewhere in the nation. Specifically 37

percent of Appalachia's non-metropolitan counties are distressed, compared with 19 percent in the rest of the nation" (Appalachian Regional Commission Report, 1996, p. 5). Although these conditions are sometimes alarming, the people of this mountainous area strive to be self-reliant and truly wish a better life for their children. Figure No. 1, shows a map of the geographic region of Appalachia which is the Alice LloydCollege service area.

Figure No. 1



Impact of Kentucky School Reform:

With major school reform mandated by the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990, Eastern Kentucky has witnessed a renewed emphasis on the role of education in the improvement of economic opportunities for the citizens of Appalachia.

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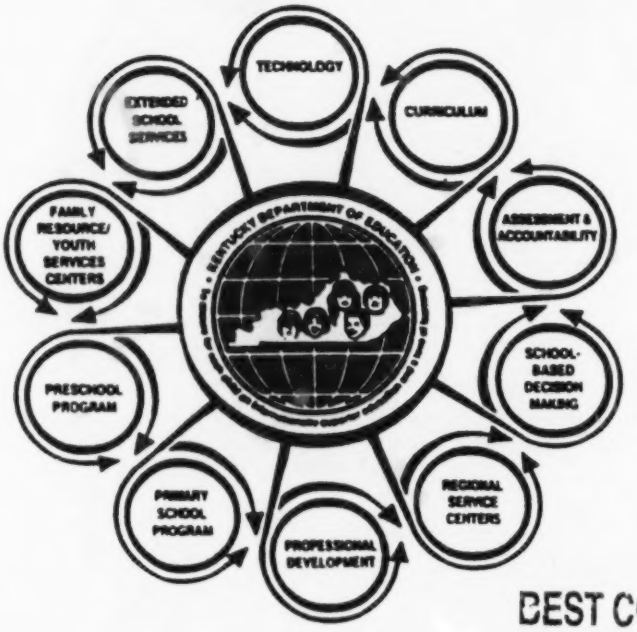
Kentucky House Bill 940 was approved by the Kentucky General Assembly and signed into law effective July 13, 1990, which began a new era of educational opportunity for all the children of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. This plan was based on one major belief: "That all children can learn and nearly all at high levels"" (Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, 1994, p. 13.). The need for higher standards was identified and set at the state level. Also the unique educational needs of each child and each school community would be expected to be met. With the high standards, a new accountability system to reward school improvement and to allow the state to intervene in schools when measures fall short, became a reality. New authentic measures such as portfolios, were introduced. Increased funding for professional development, programs for at-risk students, establishment of family recourse centers, and to correct financial disparity between wealthier and poorer school districts were provided within the state mandates. Figure No. 2, Systemic Reform, identifies the Kentucky reform initiatives.

Figure No. 2

Systemic Reform



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These initiatives are the heart of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. Acting together they will help ensure that all children succeed in school.

The disparity between the wealthy schools and the poorer schools in Kentucky, for so long, has created problems that will take perhaps a generation to correct. In many cases, it is also the poorest schools that have had the lowest academic ratings in the state. This in itself makes school reform very difficult at best to implement and to articulate.

Impact for Higher Education and Teacher Education:

There were very few provisions included in the school reform efforts for higher education and teacher education in general. Nevertheless, teacher education, by the mere fact that it prepares teachers for service in Kentucky's schools and that the schools provide clinical opportunities for teacher education candidates, creates a posture for generating vested interests in KERA. There is also a vested interest in quality levels of schools from the higher education perspective as colleges draw graduates from area schools to enroll in their respective college programs. It is for this reason that admissions officers at Alice Lloyd College have jointly participated and supported many service learning activities.

The College Mission:

To assume service learning and service leadership responsibilities with the area schools is not necessarily a new venture for Alice Lloyd College. Since 1923, ALC has worked to strengthen the intellectual community by educating mountain people for positions of leadership and service to the mountains and beyond. Among the objectives cited, two directly relate:

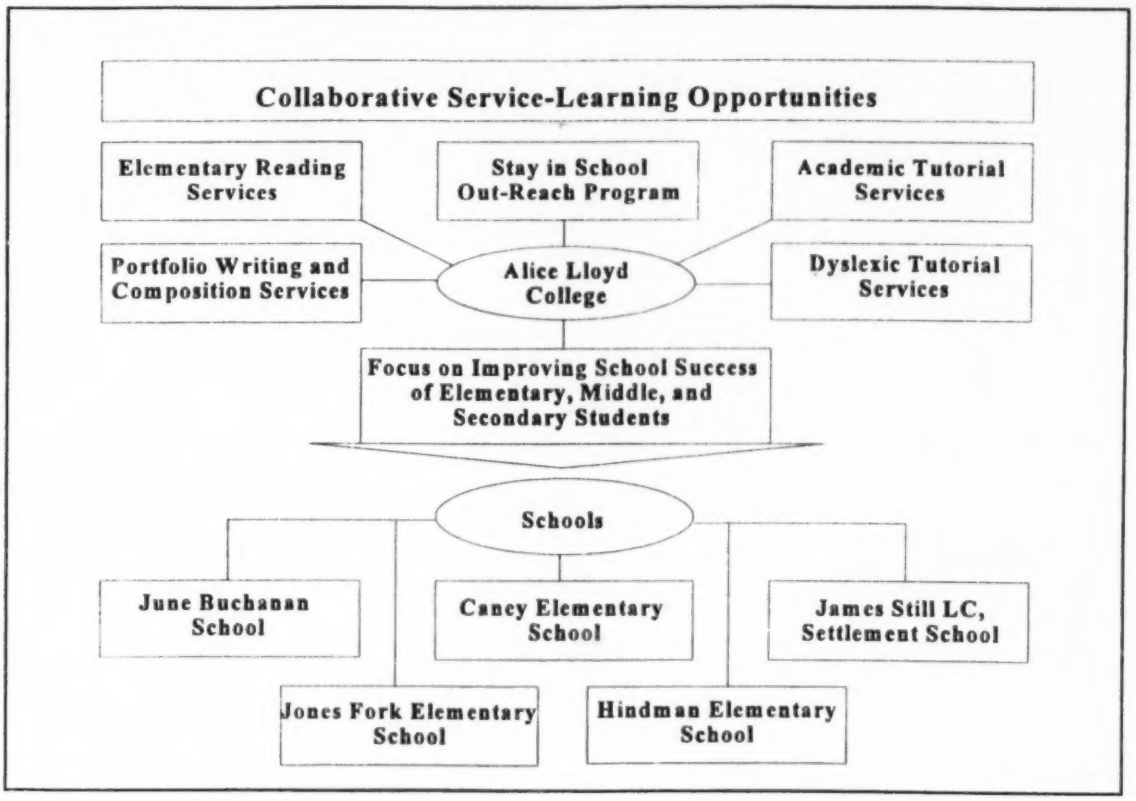
(1) To serve the community and region through appropriate outreach programs which utilize mountain people helping mountain people;

(2) To produce leaders for Appalachia who possess high moral and ethical values, an attitude of self-reliance and a sense of service to others. (Alice Lloyd College Bulletin, 1996. p. 5)

Within this context, the college has trained hundreds of students academically prepared and ready to assume service and leadership roles.

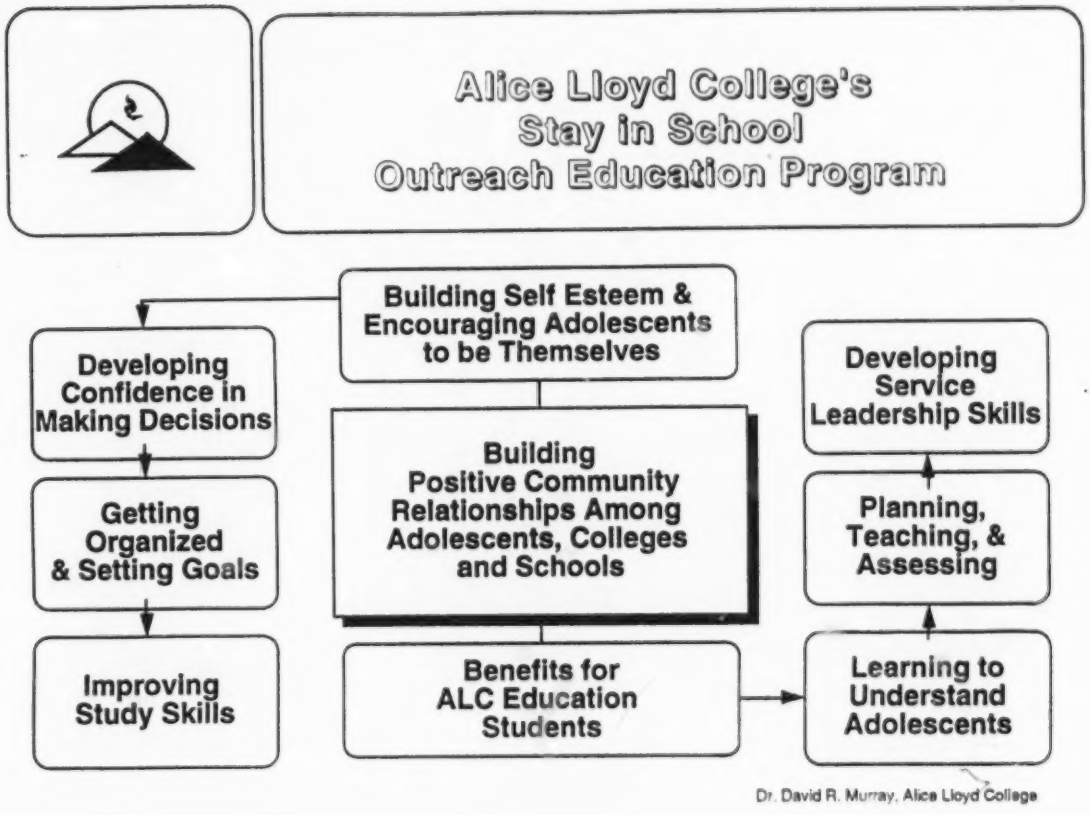
During the spring of 1995, a proposal was developed to support and strengthen formal service learning partnerships with several schools in Knott County, Kentucky. The school partners who engage in collaborative service-learning with Alice Lloyd College include the June Buchanan School, a K-12 independent school; the James Still Learning Center, a component of the Hindman Settlement School which serves dyslexic students;a and three nearby public schools: Caney Elementary , Jones Fork Elementary and Hindman Elementary, all serving children in a Kindergarten through 8th grade setting. The college has worked with these schools in the past but these relationships have been strengthened. Although grant opportunities are being pursued, they have not been realized. Even so, ALC is allocating resources to support these efforts, albeit on a more limited level than desired. This support was committed because of the overwhelming needs of the area and the passion of the ALC students who truly have a desire to do something to make a contribution to the lives of the children in the area. Any enduring gains from service learning and service leadership will ultimately come from this passion. These collaborative projects are relatively inexpensive to start and maintain. However, they are labor intensive. Nevertheless, they empower children to do better and strengthen school programs. Figure No. 3, entitled, Collaborative Service Learning Opportunities, provides an overview of the ALC efforts. Although many of the efforts are from the Department of Teacher Education, departments in the liberal arts areas also contribute. It is important to recognize that improving the conditions of children in the area and improving schools is a shared responsibility between the education department, the liberal arts and sciences and the schools.

Figure No. 3



Alice Lloyd College engages with practitioners to address needs through service learning and service leadership in a variety of ways. Perhaps the best strategy is that many of the components are integrated and infused into the college curriculum. For example, the Stay-in-School Outreach Program is a project in the secondary methods and middle school curriculum courses. Figure 4, Stay In School Outreach Education Program, illustrates the mutually beneficial aspects of the curriculum infusion of service learning. This project affords students the opportunity to plan, present and assess their presentations as a micro-teaching activity. The academic and dyslexic tutorial services are field components of an educational foundations course and an introductory educational psychology course. This provides ALC students with opportunities to work one on one with children and develop

Figure No. 4


Alice Lloyd College's
Stay in School
Outreach Education Program
Building Self Esteem & Encouraging Adolescents to be Themselves
Developing Confidence in Making Decisions
Getting Organized & Setting Goals
Improving Study Skills
Building Positive Community Relationships Among Adolescents, Colleges and Schools
Benefits for ALC Education Students
Developing Service Leadership Skills
Planning, Teaching, & Assessing
Learning to Understand Adolescents
Dr. David R. Murray, Alice Lloyd College

expertise in diagnostic and assessment techniques. It also provides opportunities for ALC students to examine and identify different learning styles and multiple intelligences factors among children. The portfolio writing and composition assistance is provided through an ALC English composition course and the elementary reading program is provided by student volunteers, who are students in the Business Department. A recent component, a US youth soccer project, was also added. College students from many discipline areas have volunteered to work with area children in this recreational venture. This project has been particularly important to the ALC international students. They share their love of the game as soccer is truly an international sport. They also share a little about their culture while they learn about the Appalachian culture in America. This service learning

component extends informal and recreational opportunities to both college students and children in this isolated region. It is hard to really know what kind of impact these endeavors have on students. In addition to promoting physical development, sportsmanship, teamwork and active thinking strategies, this type of activity also lends itself to building self-confidence, self-reliance and individual development. Often the children are curious about college life. ALC students are encouraged to informally talk with the children. Hopefully, these conversations will raise the interest of otherwise at-risk youth in furthering their education. These personal connections help develop a sense of caring for others and also create a sense of social awareness. With active student participation and a direct focus on children's needs, opportunities to promote growth are ever present.

Qualitative Review:

As many of the service learning projects are new, no summative evaluations have been extensively conducted. However, an open ended survey was sent out to the college students participating in the service learning program. Students were asked to cite their perceptions about the program. By far, the majority of students who responded to the survey, responded in relation to the Stay-in-School project. Virtually all students responded that they believed the service learning program had a positive impact on the middle school students. One indicated that "The Stay-in-School program in particular made students aware that there is a choice they can make about the direction of their life." Another respondent suggested the children didn't really have a clear view of what school was all about. She goes on to say, "The Stay-in-School program may help some of those students to understand that school is not a punishment, but an opportunity." Yet a third student indicated that the service program made the students reflect on their lives and placed a real genuine importance on believing in themselves and aspiring to goals to make dreams a reality. The program showed students that people in the area (Appalachian region) can go

on to achieve higher education. This is particularly important because the children were able to recognize college students from their area. It makes college a realistic possibility. They had lots of questions about high school and college. One participant felt that this was a good sign. Many students felt that more time should be allocated for questions in the future.

In terms of how the Stay-in-School Outreach Program impacted them as college students, several positions were reported. One student was shocked at how much eleven and twelve year old children hated school. Another really enjoyed the opportunity to talk to children of the age they were studying and will hope to be teaching. Basically most of the respondents indicated that service learning had been meaningful to them. One ALC married couple said it was a very positive experience. "It provided both of us with leadership roles involving young people, a wonderful prelude to teaching." Exposure to actual middle school children helped many of the ALC teacher education candidates. Some were quite interested in student reactions. At first, a student reported that she had been nervous but soon realized just how important it was to reach out to the students and say, "Hey I care! Your life is important, and you need to make the best of it!" She felt very strongly about being a contributor to the middle school children. Along the same lines, another respondent said, "This program gave me the chance to go to schools and work with children. I think that this is the most important part of the education program at ALC." The student goes on to say, "Anytime that I can get out of the classroom and into the schools, it helps me to understand what it takes to deal with students in an actual situation and not just thinking about theory." Finally, one student from the college stated, "It showed me the merit of starting early when an issue as important as staying in school is being delivered."

The volunteers were asked to discern the qualities of the program as a professional learning experience. Many indicated that it helped in the development of teaching skills. For example, the concept of planning and rehearsing to speak was realized quite quickly.

Decision making and platform skills became quite obvious. One student suggested that classroom management became real and she learned from her mistakes, Persistence was a valuable trait and by the end of their presentation, she was confident. Opportunities for experiencing leadership roles and getting your feet wet was important to many. One volunteer indicated that "I learned to really communicate with the children." She goes on to say, "It was one of the first experiences where I have interacted with children in a school setting other than just through observation for my education class."

When the participants were asked how they felt the program was beneficial from a service learning approach, again, several responses which covered a variety of perspectives were given. Most felt the service experience was a win-win proposition. Schools benefited by having the college students speak to the children. On the other side of the arrangement, it helped future teachers to see what problems they will face in their classes. For many, developing ties to the community through service was important. One of the students had strong feelings about the opportunities students had in assuming team leadership roles. Also the values instilled in youngsters about staying in school and pursuing an education ranked high. The positive feelings of being helpful was a reoccurring expression. One student stated, "I feel it was an outstanding service project. It was practical, necessary and very important. " She suggests, "As corny as it may sound, if even one potential drop out was persuaded that education is important and decided to finish school, the program was worth while."

The next issue addressed in the open ended questionnaire related to what changes might be considered to improve the program for the college student as well as for the children within the middle schools. Virtually all the respondents suggest that they would like the opportunity to get to know the middle school children better. One suggestion was made to recruit college students who graduated from the same schools that were visited. One respondent suggested that this would convey the idea "you (the middle school student) could go to college too." Others suggested that breaking up into smaller groups

might encourage the students to ask more questions. Still others would like the program to be less formal and be able talk to the children on a more personal level to convey to them why the ALC students chose to continuing their education. The opportunity to share personal experience was cited by many quite often. Varied activities and more audience participation were also indicated. Some said that they were nervous about presenting to the students and would like more time to prepare. One suggested that getting children involved in playing games would generate more student participation.

Charting a New Course:

In *The Basic School: A Community for Learning*, Earnest Boyer, the former US secretary for Education, suggests that there is a coherent core of commonalties and key components in effective institutions engaged in reform efforts. One commonality suggests that students see connections across disciplines and the second is to relate what they learn to life. Another pertinent component in regards to service, is to meet the needs of the whole child in the community in enrichment programs (Boyer, 1995).

This would reinforce the idea that service learning should:

- be an inter-disciplinary effort and involve the entire higher education community;
- be related to what college students are actually studying and infuse these experiences in the curriculum, course work and field experiences;
- be diversified in its service efforts to address the whole child in its complex array of needs in an atmospheres of caring;
- be a continuous process and focused on goals that will improve academic and social conditions;
- extend an academic pursuit into out of school activities and draw community support, involvement and leadership;

- select projects that will increase the engagement of students and children and/or the community at their appropriate ability and achievement levels;
- focus on empowering the people you serve to solve their own problems and to strengthen their own communities through a commitment of service.

Finally, as Gwynn Mettetal and Dee Bryant suggest, "Service as citizenship emphasizes the importance of life long community service as a crucial aspect of being a citizen" (Mettetal and Bryant, 1996). Strengthening citizenship as a member of a community, a state, a country and a global community is incredibly important to isolated regions.

If we reflect on the original purpose of Alice Lloyd College, we find that the mission remains virtually unchanged. As P. David Searles writes in his book, *A College for Appalachia*, "Lloyd's statement of faith was, 'The leaders are here.'" Searles goes on to indicate that the college founder strongly believed in providing opportunity to develop leadership potential and to instill a sense of service to all students at ALC. In return for a free education, " A life time fee" in an unwritten pledge was given to settle in the mountains and take a stand for capable and consecrated citizenship and leadership to solve the problems that remain (Searles, 1995).

One does not need to look very hard to see this vision realized. It is just as much a part of the students makeup at Alice Lloyd College now as it ever was. Many challenges are the same in this rural region of the country. However, as efforts are directed towards utilizing new technologies and avenues, and as efforts are made to interface with the global community, new challenges will arise. As these challenges emerge, education and service leadership will be deeply needed.

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